2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

A widespread variant

on virilocal residence will be discussed later and illustrated in Chapter IV of Part III. 591

(*b*) *Village pattern*

There was a traditional pattern of Ngoni village organization, which consisted in the siting of the huts in the village and the corresponding social groups formed in the different sections. Informants made it clear that when the Ngoni first settled in the areas where the two kingdoms now exist, the royal villages and the chiefs' villages were very large. Segmentation of these large villages, not only by the *lusungulu* 'going out' as already described, but also by sections of the village breaking off, began before the Europeans came and continued after their arrival. In the 1930's the traditional pattern was sometimes altered by a desire to build a 'model village' laid out in lines instead of in a horse-shoe curve round the kraal. Even in some of these model villages the grouping of huts, though no longer in a series of circles, indicated the house affiliation of their owners and their relationship to the head of the village. 621

The traditional ground-plan of an Ngoni village was based on the main kraal which occupied the centre. The gate of the kraal was on the open end of the horse-shoe formation, and the most important hut, the *indlunkulu*, was at the top of the kraal. On either side of the *indlunkulu* were grouped the huts belonging to the houses associated with the wives of the owner of the village. Behind the *indlunkulu* were the huts of his married sons and those of his brothers who chose to live with him, and this group of huts, known as *cigodlo*, spread round behind the main huts of the owners of houses. Behind each house-group of huts were the huts of the *induna* associated with the house; in large villages he often had a kraal and reproduced a similar small village plan in his own circle of huts. On the wings of the village, curving towards the gate of the kraal and called by the Ngoni 'the horns of the village', were the less important families in the village. The general principle of the village plan in terms of social status and the siting of huts was that the nearer huts were to the *indlunkulu* the higher was the prestige of their owner. The following very much simplified plan of an Ngoni village illustrates the principle of siting the huts in relation to social grouping, as it was when a new *lusungulu* village was set up. In this plan the *indlunkulu* hut was owned by the mother of the owner of the village, one of his father's widows who moved out with him. When she died the big wife on her right might move into the actual *indlunkulu* hut, or stay in her own hut while another widow of her father-in-law entered the *indlunkulu*. There was no invariable rule for this type of succession, but there were only these two possible alternatives. Reference should be made here to one other hut site—that of the *laweni* or boys' dormitory. It was usually sited behind either the big house or the *gogo* house, far enough behind [417] [554]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

woman had her home. The other was the 'gate'[2] of the kraal at the opposite end of the enclosure to the 'big house'. The name by which this 'gate' was known applied also to the space on each side of the gap in the kraal fence through which the cattle went out and came in—a gap which was closed at night with heavy poles. Here at the gate the men of the village sat by day, ate their meals brought to them by children from their wives' huts, talked, received strangers, pursued their crafts, and supervised the return of the cattle in the evenings.

In and around the main huts within the tall reed fences, the life of a Ngoni household went on. Some of the huts were rectangular, others round. All had a veranda built up above the ground-level and shaded by the house roof. The back parts of the veranda were often enclosed with mats to make additional storage space. In old Ngoni households the open space around the hut was kept swept and mudded and polished like a floor, so that people could sit there in comfort and cleanliness as well as on the veranda. Near the house was one or more little reed platforms about five feet above the ground, where kitchen utensils, gourds and vegetables were laid to dry, and which were used to sit under as shelter from the sun in the hot months. Large and small wooden pounding mortars and poles, clay pots of every size and shape; mats for sleeping and for drying grain, baskets for many purposes, wooden food trays and spoons, gourds of several shapes, formed the traditional household equipment always to be seen outside and around the hut, as well as inside.

In each household, within the main hut, there were two places of particular significance. One was by the two main door-posts at the entrance. These posts with the hollow for the fireplace in the centre of the floor divided the hut into a right-hand and left-hand side—the men's side and the

[1] and [2] A short list of the vernacular terms for some these common Ngoni place-names is given at end of the book.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

343
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481
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8. A well-filled grain store

342
415
516
291
301
243

[facing page 48]

9. Winnowing

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

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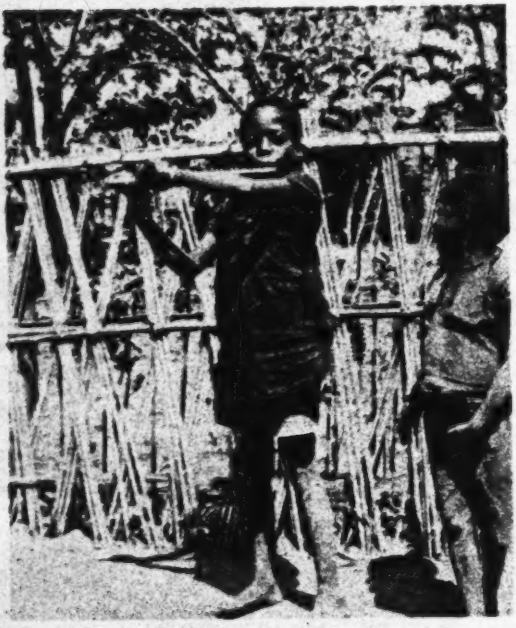
534
417
857



10. Young musicians

[facing page 49]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

291
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534
417

11. Young musicians

[342]

[facing page 64]

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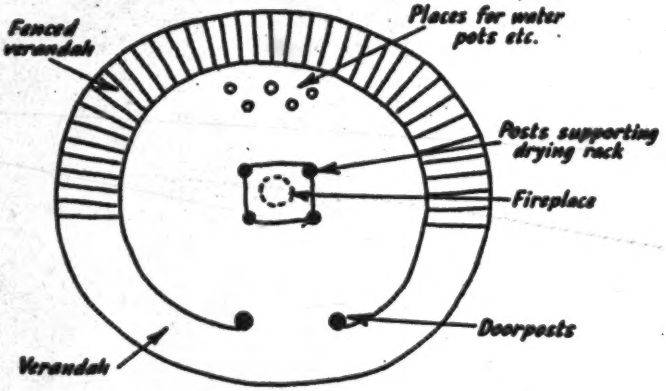

DIAGRAM OF HUT

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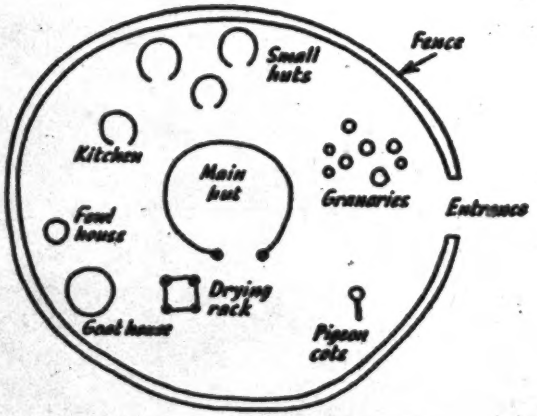
● 417



DIASRAM OF HOUSEHOLD COMPOUND

[p. 74]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

old Ngoni families, and shining like marble, as did the hut and veranda floors. On this polished space, or else on the veranda, the child's grandmother sat when callers had been announced, and from that vantage-point she could command the entrance through the surrounding fence, and agree to receive callers who had asked for admittance. Also in front of the hut was another drying platform which was large enough to offer shelter from the sun in hot weather; the dovecot where the 'royal pigeons' lived if the household was of the royal clan or distinguished enough to aspire to keeping pigeons. Off to one side was a hut for the goats at night and another, hoisted up on a platform, for the poultry. On the other side of the main hut were the grain stores, built up on low platforms. The maize stores were up to ten feet high and ten feet in diameter in these big households, and well-to-do women would have four or five of them bulging with maize cobs. There were smaller circular mudded bins for ground-nuts and millet. Behind the hut were two or three small huts where some of the helpers slept, and one of them was generally a kitchen hut. Piles of wood, and bundles of thatching grass bound neatly with bark rope, were stacked against the fence.

There were innumerable objects around the compound of interest to the small child prowling about. Two or three tall wooden pounding mortars, so heavy that they could not be lifted and had to be trundled on their circular base from one place to another, stood near the kitchen hut, or were moved to the front if the women pounding had to watch children there. There were much smaller mortars for pounding ground-nuts, kept when not in use in the fenced-in veranda; and one or more large flat stones for grinding finger millet and bulrush millet. Baskets were of all sizes and shapes from the small round food basket with a lid in which father's food was carried to the kraal gate, to the wide shallow winnowing baskets, the deep round carrying baskets some as large as two feet in diameter, and the porous baskets used as

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

521 867 men's affairs. The kind of topics discussed by men at the kraal gate included hunting, in the right season; cases heard in the courts and the application of Ngoni law to all subjects of the Ngoni chiefs; the organization of village affairs from tax collecting and dealing with tax evaders to beer drinks and burials and building houses; the sales of cotton, tobacco and cattle at near-by markets and the current prices; the various labour recruiters combing the villages for likely young men and the latest stories brought back by men who had returned from working in the south. Every now and then, particularly when the talk ranged round decisions in the courts or adding to the herds of cattle, references were made to the Ngoni past, to their relations with Europeans, both missionaries and officials, and to the behaviour of the non-Ngoni groups in the Ngoni kingdoms. The older boys listened attentively and as we shall see later in Chapter VII acquired among other things an extensive knowledge about the needs and uses of cattle. The younger ones pricked up their ears now and then when a familiar name or event was mentioned, and stored up questions to ask their father at a time when he was willing to listen and answer.

576 417 There was the usual Ngoni formality about where people sat at the kraal gate. The most senior men sat on each side of the opening, leaning up against the gate-posts, with the rest in decreasing order of rank as they were farther from the gate. The cleared space on each side of the gate and in front of it was all known as the 'gate of the kraal'. The craftsmen [463] who were carving wood or twisting bark rope, making baskets or plaiting mats, sat according to their age and rank on the edges of the senior group or among them. They could have carried on their trade anywhere, but they preferred the company of their fellows and did not want to miss listening to the talk or the arrival of strangers. The herd-boys, when 858 they were present, were on the extreme edges of those sitting [561] there, divided into two groups, 'youths' and boys. Each [262] group made its own fire for boiling milk and roasting sweet potatoes or ground-nuts.96

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

422 Mpezeni is the owner of the land, or of the world. The cattle kept in
231 the royal villages are held to have belonged formerly to Mpezeni I or
643 to Zwangendaba, and therefore still belong to the Paramount Chief. Chiefs and other members of the royal lineage who have cattle inherited in this way, in fact dispose of them as they please when the Paramount Chief is not in their village, but if he appears and a beast is killed in his honour, it is the Paramount who is praised as the owner of the beast and not the local owner. In the capital and chief's villages the lieutenants are more under the control of the chief of the county, who may intervene to depose a lieutenant if he thinks that his cattle are not being well looked after.

622 The Administration does not distinguish between one type of vil-
621 lage and another, and gives the same title of headman[1] to the man in
648 charge of the village, whoever he may be. It tends to act on the assumption that all headmen are of equal status and have the same amount of authority in their villages. Combined with the decline in the power of the royal lineage, this policy may lead to the assimilation of the different types of village to a common form.

II. THE VILLAGE

Material Setting

361 Ngoni villages, which form the principal units of administration in the country, contain from half a dozen to 120 huts. It is seldom more than a quarter of a mile from one edge of a village to the other. There is a rough arrangement of huts into parallel lines, with the doors all facing the same way at right-angles to the direction of the [343] lines. Kitchen huts, which are similar in appearance to dwelling huts, are included in these lines, while in front of a line of dwellings may be a line of storehouses and sties for small stock. On the edge of the ● [417] village are the cattle byres. There are seldom any fences marking off courtyards within the village, so that it is possible to sit on the veranda of a hut and look along at all the other verandas. If there are well-established divisions within the village, the boundaries of the divisions may be indicated by lines of aloes.

592 Most people, except polygynists and some children, may be said to live in one hut, in which they keep most of their belongings and where they usually sleep. A single hut may be occupied by up to about ten

[1] Usually *bedimas*, pl. *mabedimas*; otherwise *mfumu yamuzi*, pl. *mafumu wamizi*. The specific term for headman of a cadet or commoner village is *muvimuzi*.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

the edge of gardens, and some people spend most of their time there, returning to the village only to fetch food. Beer parties are held in the gardens, and the villages, particularly in the middle of the week, are largely deserted during the day. One or two boys or old men may stay behind to look after the cattle. Streams are in spate at this time of year, and some men build garden byres to which they move their cattle to avoid the risk of the animals or their herdboys being taken by the water.

This life in the gardens is important from the point of view of inter-village action in that it provides an opportunity for new residential groups to form, albeit temporarily. People without garden shelters of their own may share the shelter of a neighbouring gardener, who may be from another village. People may site their gardens so that they are adjacent to those of kindred from other villages, with whom they will be united for this period of garden residence. Thus, for example, a woman who lives in her husband's village has a widowed mother still living in *her* dead husband's village a mile away. The gardens of the mother and daughter are adjacent, and they both possess garden huts which are built alongside one another. They co-operate in much of the work of their gardens.

With the completion of the harvest, the need for living in the garden ceases, but some people delay their return to the village for a month or so. The explanation given is that immediately after the end of the rains and the harvest, there is much activity by the Administration and the Native Authority in organizing public works, and that by staying on in the gardens people hope to avoid becoming involved in these projects.

Cattle-keeping

The circular village cattle byre, with the dwelling huts built round it in a great circle, as occurs among the South-Eastern Bantu and as reported by Elmslie[1] from Mombera's Ngoni of Nyasaland, is not found at the present time among the Fort Jameson Ngoni. Most villages now have two or three separate cattle byres, and they are placed on the periphery of the village area. They consist of fenced enclosures open to the weather, with a single entrance blocked with poles, and may be up to 20 yards across. Calves are kept in smaller enclosures or in deserted dwelling huts whose owners have gone away or are dead. Where there are well-defined clusters of huts within a village, each cluster may have its own byre, but this is not always the case. Cattle

[1] Elmslie, p. 37.

/6 cont'd/

417 Byres for the cattle are placed on the edge of the village, with a separate division for calves at the side of the main byre. The robustness with which the byre is built depends on the extent to which [134] there are marauding animals, particularly hyenas, leopards and lions in the vicinity. The usual method of construction is using poles some ten to twenty feet long, placed close together in a circle of about twenty to twenty-five feet in diameter. Thorn branches are placed on the outside of the fence, and the gate is a simple affair of several upright poles leaning in a slot made by two cross-poles. If an anthill is available, the byre will be made round it, so that the cattle may to some extent be able to clamber up out of the mud, which in the wet season may come up to their bellies. The building of a byre is undertaken by the men who will keep their cattle in it, and when a village moves to a new site, this is the first job to be tackled. Each owner of seven or eight head of cattle may have his [403] own byre, but a man with many cattle may share a byre with his brothers. Owners of one or two head keep their cattle with their relatives.

231 /7/ Small domestic animals, such as pigs, goats, sheep and chickens, are kept in the village, near the hut of their owner, and their pens are provided with roofs and sometimes a fence as well, for [136] protection against hyenas. Deserted dwelling huts, whose owners have gone away or have died, are used as shelters for calves and other animals.

417 [285] [251] Drying platforms are built to provide a stand for reed mats on which flour can be dried in the sun. If no platform has been built, the mats are placed on the ground where the flour is at the mercy of straying animals. Pigeon houses are built on platforms about six 235 feet off the ground, with small holes to allow entry for the pigeons. Chicken houses are also sometimes built in this way, with a ladder 343 to enable the chicken to ascend. The more prosperous villagers may [511] have other buildings, such as latrines, washing shelters, or occasionally open-sided shelters for sitting in and gossiping.

/11 cont'd/

241 The busiest time of the year in the garden is at the beginning of the rains, when there is much work to be done planting and weeding, [136] and scaring away the monkeys and wild pigs. Later on, in the new year, after the garden has been weeded twice, it is possible to think of enlarging the garden at one edge, and if it is not too late, the newly cleared portion may be planted with a catch crop. Weeding and clearing new ground are both activities that are carried out to some extent co-operatively, either on a mutual help basis between [476] two women, or more frequently in return for beer provided by the owner of the garden. On the day before the party, a few men and women come to the garden and do their share of the work in advance, in the belief that it is better not to have to work and drink on the same day. The next day, the bulk of the party arrive at the garden, and the wife of the owner brings out a pot of beer from the village. When the first half of the garden has been finished, there is a pause, and the beer is drunk. On completion of the whole garden, the party returns to the village and drinking begins in earnest. It is not necessary to have worked in the garden to be able to attend the subsequent drinking, [273] [576] and the well-mannered host will specifically set aside certain pots of beer for those who have not been to the garden.

/12/ Towards the end of the rains, there is less cultivating to be done, but the ravages of wild animals become more serious, and many families sleep for two or three months in the garden, returning to the village only to obtain food. Garden shelters are simple open-sided affairs with a thatched roof, but those owners who intend to [342] sleep in their gardens for a long time, build small circular huts as in the village, or conical shelters with the roof reaching to the ground. [417] A few lookout platforms built in trees are used as vantage points for spotting wild animals. If a man has a garden a long way from the village, particularly across a stream which will be in spate in the late rains, he may build a byre for his cattle at the garden.

Maize and ground-nuts are the first crops to be harvested, and later finger millet, root crops, and finally kaffir-corn. Maize is 251 stooked before the cobs are removed, and these are then dried on platforms before being carried to the village to be stored.